

Promoting Health in the Pacific

Story and Photos by Heike Hasenauer



IN his laboratory at Camp Zama, Japan, Iwakami Masahiro keeps company with a large tank of Madagascar roaches, a red-headed centipede, various types of mosquitoes and some Japanese golden spiders.

Masahiro uses some of the bugs — such as cockroaches, of which Japan has an abundance, he said — to test their resistance to new varieties of pesticides that are less harmful to the environment.

In his mosquito-surveillance program, Masahiro traps the insects and checks whether they carry Japanese encephalitis, malaria or dengue fever. He also takes some of the bugs to area schools to introduce children to such dangerous ones as the sparrow wasp, whose sting kills some 30 people each year in Japan.

Masahiro is one of 56 soldiers and civilians working for the Camp Zama-based U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, Pacific, said LTC Thomas Little, CHPPM-PAC's deputy for technical services.

The organization serves the entire Pacific Theater, providing public health services, humanitarian assistance, field preventive medicine and force health protection training before deployments, Little said. It's also responsible for inspecting dining facilities and swimming pools, and conducting industrial hygiene checks, work-site visits and water quality analysis at Army installations in mainland Japan.

CHPPM-PAC's experts also provide veterinary and epidemiology services to indigenous people in such places as Mongolia and China, Little said.

Its soldiers routinely deploy to exercise sites in such places as Siberia and the Philippines to provide field preventive medicine support, he said.

Water quality tests are just one of the many important tasks carried out by CHPPM-PAC's 56 soldiers and civilians.

USARPAC photo



(Left) PFC Fernando Rivas takes a water sample from a field sink. (Below, left) Large Madagascar roaches are among the insects used for testing.

glasses. He also directed doctors and dentists to some 900 patients in three days.

Recently, CHPPM-PAC established a Special Medical Augmentation Response Team, one of three that currently exist in the Army. The seven-member preventive-medicine team responds to natural or man-made disasters within 14 hours of notification, Little said.

Other CHPPM-PAC teams deploy to remote islands to teach environmental conservation and basic sanitation classes, or to measure levels of contaminants, Little said.

At the Environmental Laboratory Division's Drinking Water Laboratory technicians study water samples to analyze levels of 28 substances — including phosphorous, chlorine, copper and lead — to ensure they don't exceed EPA standards, said MAJ James St. Angelo, chief of CHPPM-PAC's Environmental Health Engineering Division.

When someone in Korea dropped formaldehyde into a sanitation system, CHPPM-PAC assisted Eighth U.S. Army personnel in cleaning it up, Little said.

And when terrorist cult members in Japan released a chemical substance on the Tokyo subway several years ago, Japanese officials sought out CHPPM-PAC's commander for guidance. The same was true when workmen who were building a hazardous-materiel storage facility on Okinawa discovered a container of a chemical agent dating from the Vietnam War, Little said.

CPT Carlos Corredor, program manager of the Health Physics-Nuclear-Biological-Chemical Laboratory, works to protect soldiers from radiation. Among his missions is monitoring the emissions from X-ray machines to ensure they comply with safety standards.

Corredor said his laboratory would be the one to respond to a crisis such as an nuclear fuel spill from a ura-

nium-processing plant. He and others in his lab, therefore, teach soldiers how to care for NBC casualties.

In the Industrial Hygiene Program, team members certify that test equipment is safe and that organizations are following safety procedures.

With more than 60 percent of its support going to units in Korea and Hawaii, CHPPM-PAC plays a critical role in safeguarding the health of America's primary fighting forces in the Pacific Theater.

Keeping them well is tantamount to keeping them ready, Little said. □

CHPPM-PAC plays a critical role in safeguarding the health of America's primary fighting forces in the Pacific Theater.

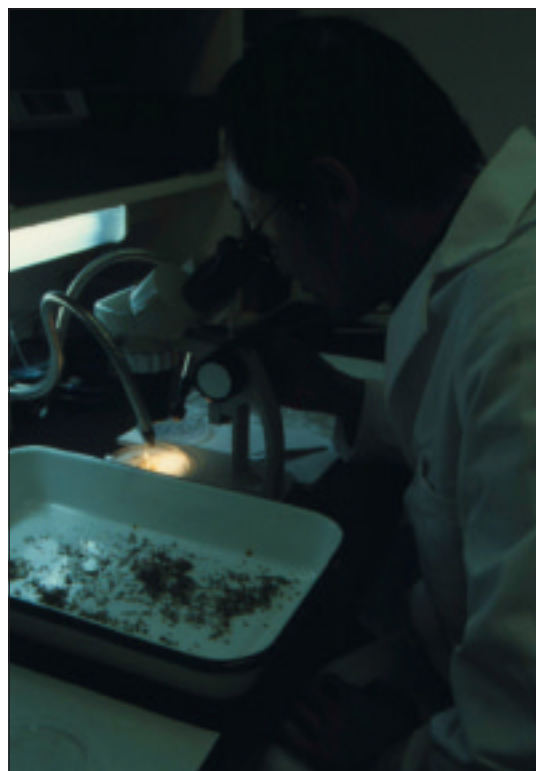
☆ U.S. Government Printing Office: 2001-472-08320020

Environmental health engineer CPT Christopher Johnson planned and coordinated medical-assistance missions in East Timor from July through October 2000, when United Nations peacekeepers were there helping to quell local violence.

"Eighty percent of my job was coordinating with East Timor citizens to determine what type of medical services they needed and then requesting those services from U.N. personnel," Johnson said.

Then he publicized when and where medical care would be provided so patients would arrive where help was being offered.

Among the services he arranged was a Navy "eye" team visit at which optometrists issued 2,500 pairs of



Entomology technician Iwakami Masahiro studies a variety of mosquitoes to identify those that carry diseases.